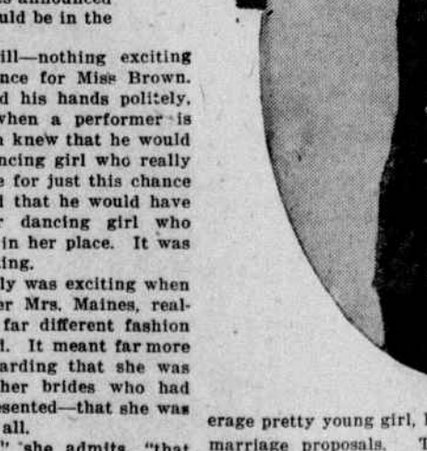
"The Prettiest Bride I've Seen"-President Harding

How a Girl's Dream Came True When at Last She Arrived at the White House—Hearty Compliment of Chief Executive an Epoch in Life of Mrs. George H. Maines, Formerly Maxine Brown of Denver—Stage Career Begun When She Was Only Six Had a Triumphant Climax

Below is a picture of Miss Maxine Brown as she appeared in public at six years of age. The oval below shows George H. Maines, her husband, to-day.



Above is Mrs. George H. Maines, formerly Miss Maxine Brown, who was called "the prettiest bride" by President Harding, and a recent portrait of the nation's Chief Executive.

ALMOST every bride is told by some one, of course, that she is beautiful. Even she whose loveliness is almost wholly of the soul and not of the flesh may be certain that she will receive the obvious compliment, taking comfort from the old saying of the philosophers: "Every woman is beautiful."

But there are few brides who have stood before a King, a Prince or a President and have heard the royal or the Presidential lips pronounce them loveliest of all. And, indeed, there are few who would not trade the compliments of almost every one else for the praise of a King—or a President.

At any rate young Mrs. George Maines, who until quite recently was Miss Maxine Brown of New York and Denver, Col., may consider herself one of the most distinguished of all recent brides, for President Harding just the other day said to her:

"You are the prettiest bride I have seen since I came to the White House!"

Of course President Harding is a gallant man. His genial qualities are far famed. But he did not say to the flustered and blushing Mrs. Maines: "You are a very pretty bride," but he said: "You are the prettiest!"

Makes This Young Bride Almost a National Figure

Thus this young woman, who is pictured on this page in all the sentimental splendor of her bridal gown, has become almost a national figure. Perhaps one might say an international one. For surely even Princess Mary, the foremost bride of Great Britain, will be interested in knowing just what was the American President's idea of feminine loveliness, and it is more than possible that Lady Lascelles, Princess Mary that was, will slyly look in her mirror when she learns what President Harding's standard is.

So far as is known to the preservers of unofficial history of Washington Administrations no President of late years has dared to distinguish one young woman's beauty above another's. President Roosevelt was not averse to distributing marks of distinction among the most famous men. He gave them memberships in a certain club apparently without fear of being taken to task. But there is no record of his ever having said to a blushing young matron, "You are lovelier than all others."

So why, indeed, shouldn't Mrs. Maines be happier than all other brides? A nation may point to her as one who represents its President's idea of the best in feminine beauty.

And, as is so often true, there is a little story behind the big story—about this Western bride who so impressed the President that he threw all caution to the winds to say just what he meant.

Appeared 14 Years Ago In a Musical Play

Mrs. George H. Maines, to give the bride all her new name, appeared fourteen years ago for the first time before the public in an amateur performance of a musical play, "Professor Napoleon." This was in Denver, where she was born, and she was then 6 years old. Even thus young her dancing and acting ability drew the attention of the dramatic critics of Denver's leading newspapers. She received the highest praise from them, and a great future was predicted for her.

Even then little Miss Brown was sure she would dance and sing her way to fame.

She worked and studied hard for her career. The highest ambition she had was to some day dance before the President. Like all other famous danseuses, the culmination of her career would be in an appearance before the head of her country. In Europe the young dancer hopes some day to dance for a King. A President was even a greater spur to Miss Maxine.

President Harding was then just Editor Harding of Marion, Ohio. Perhaps he, too, was aspiring even then to the White House, but, like six-year-old Miss Brown, without much hope of achieving such a destiny. However, fate works miracles, as the philosophers say.

In Marion Mr. Harding kept on the even way which eventually was to land him in the Presidency, wholly unconscious of the efforts of the Denver girl to arrive there about simultaneously.

Little Miss Brown, encouraged by the appreciation of her friends of her dancing feet, began to appear in other amateur entertainments and gradually to find a place for herself on the professional stage. Her parents objected seriously to her becoming a professional actress, but she pleaded that, since all small boys hoped to become President, she should be given opportunity to hope to dance for a President—and, of course, she easily convinced her parents that the only way to dance for a President was to go on the stage and become famous as a dancer.

From the most modest parts in various musical comedy productions Miss Brown graduated into more important roles. She became one of the most popular "dancing comediennes," as they say in stage talk. Many will remember her in "The Right Girl," "Buddies" and the splendid revival of "Florodora."

It was while dancing with one of these productions her long looked forward to opportunity came. She was to dance for the President.

Of course there was nothing so extraordinary about this opportunity when it did come. That is the way with most dreams—when they are realized they prove to be quite commonplace after all. Her company was booked to appear in Washington and it was announced that the President would be in the Presidential box.

There was no thrill—nothing exciting at all in the experience for Miss Brown. The President clapped his hands politely, as he always does when a performer is pleasing. Miss Brown knew that he would not remember the dancing girl who really had gone on the stage for just this chance to dance for him, and that he would have applauded any other dancing girl who might have appeared in her place. It was dreadfully disappointing.

But it most assuredly was exciting when Miss Brown, or rather Mrs. Maines, realized her dream in a far different fashion than she had dreamed. It meant far more to be told by Mr. Harding that she was different than all other brides who had come to him to be presented—that she was the loveliest of them all.

"I was so excited," she admits, "that his voice sounded as if it were miles away. You see," she continued, "I hadn't the faintest idea I was going to meet the President. We had received a special permit to go through the White House, it being after hours when we got there. My husband is a friend of George Christian, Mr. Harding's secretary. Mr. Christian informed us he would take us to the President himself. Why, I was scared to death!

Had Real Stage Fright When Facing President

"I had never known what stage fright really meant until I found myself standing before the President's desk. He held out his hand to me. I think he said something about it being a pity we were having a blizzard during our honeymoon, but I am not quite sure of his exact words. I know that when he shook hands with me I blushed to the roots of my hair and became so nervous that I didn't dare look at him. He was interested in my career and wanted to know whether or not I was going to continue my work on the stage."

Maxine of course, being above the average pretty young girl, had received many marriage proposals. To one or two of them she was favorably inclined, and had just about made up her mind to marry when the question of her career inevitably intervened. In each case the man she thought she loved objected to her return to the stage. She says frankly she wouldn't have married if her husband to be had not agreed she might continue her dancing.

The story of her becoming Mrs. George Maines is romantic. Mr. Maines has been for several years prominent in baseball as president of one of the leagues. One day Maxine was invited to dinner by Ban Johnson, president of the American Baseball Association. Among other guests was Mr. Maines, who immediately anchored at Maxine's side and refused to be removed. She saw her dinner companion but three times after the dinner before January 3, and on that day they were married—their fourth meeting.

Mr. Maines had been one of the founders of the American Legion and numbered among his best friends many leading politicians. His bride was presented to many Congressmen, and even to Cabinet members. All of them said she was beautiful, but none counted as did the President himself.

"What did your husband think of the President's praise?" Mrs. Maines was asked.

"Oh, he was immensely pleased. He could not have been prouder if he had been awarded a gold medal for something. He walked out of the White House and down the steps as if he had been appointed head of the navy or the army."

Of course almost every one will want to know just what Mrs. Maines looks like—since to describe her is to tell of the President's idea of a pretty bride.

She is of medium height, with dark brown hair, brown eyes and a beautifully clear skin. She weighs just a little over a hundred—perhaps a hundred and fifteen pounds. She is one of the few young women of the stage who does not talk about her profession unless she is urged. To the President she promised her vote if he is a candidate again. It would not do at all to repeat, Mrs. Maines declares, what the President said to that.

If there is anything remarkable in Mrs. Maines's success on the stage, besides the ability which caused her progress, it was her strange ambition to some day dance for the head of the Government.

"Perhaps it was because the boys always were talking," she explains, "about their chances of being President. I remember one little boy who attempted to ridicule my success as the little girl dancer in the amateur musical play in Denver. He couldn't bear the little airs of superiority I indulged in, and said to me one afternoon after school: 'Huh; you're a girl—you can never amount to anything; I'm a boy, and I may be President some day. Mother says she's sure I will be. You can't ever be anything.'

"I was hurt by this lack of appreciation, and I cried bitterly—because I was just a girl. It was during the night that it occurred to me that, since the people who went to see the play enjoyed seeing me dance, perhaps this boy friend of mine would be pleased too, if, as he intended, he should be the President when we both grew up.

"It was just to spite this little fellow I determined to study dancing, to learn to sing, and to become a great star. I used to dramatize, in my own fancies, my appearance before an august personage, very handsome and seated on a throne, and fascinating him by my beautifully graceful dancing. The handsome, august personage was, for a time, the little boy, of course. After a while another youngster took his place in my heart, and at once the personage in the Presidential chair changed to look accordingly.

Had Vision of White House And of Triumph There

"When I really began to grow up I began to give a less definite identity to the future President whom I was to charm, but I worked just as hard. I really think that many a time, when I was tired and discouraged, it was the vision of myself triumphantly leaving the White House after a dance before the President that kept me at my work.

"After I had become quite well known to theatergoers throughout the country the childishness of my dreams had disappeared. I knew the futility of hoping ever to be chosen by a President as a dancer of exceptional merit. So when that night in Washington I bowed after a whirlwind dance to a whirlwind of applause, it was only curiosity that prompted me to look at the President's box. I accepted the Presidential applause with no more gratification than I received that of the most humble occupants of the gallery. It was matter of fact and commonplace. That night I remembered my childish dreams and the little plays I had dramatized for myself, and laughed.

"But all that I had looked forward to, all that I had expected, and even more, came to me when Mr. Harding praised me. It is quite silly, I know, but nothing pleases a bride so much, I am sure, as to be told that she is lovely. It is loveliness she wants to give her husband, and she knows that husband appreciates loveliness as he would value the sparkle in a gem.

"For his sake, as much as for my own, I was happy when the President spoke. I know President Harding was only saying the thing he thought polite. Perhaps he was in an especially good humor. His face was so kind, and there was such a merry twinkle in his eye as he complimented me I hardly dare take him seriously—but it was something to remember after all."

However, Mr. Maines declares the President meant every word of it. And Mr. Christian, his secretary, is just as certain.

Origin of Horseshoe Superstitions

OF all the emblems of good fortune the horseshoe stands out conspicuously. It is not difficult to understand why lovers of horses came to adopt the horseshoe as a talisman against misfortune, for horses were considered to be essentially liable to the machinations of witches. This stands out in all the records of the Lancashire witches and other evil hags.

If precautions were not taken these mischievous witches would ride the horses at dead of night over the hills, and when the owner came to the stable in the morning he would find his animals in a lather and exhausted. A horseshoe fastened over the stable door was believed to ward off such evil.

Almost everybody considers it unlucky to pass a horseshoe on the road without picking it up. It is a sign emblematic of the greatest power. We are indebted for this statement to old tales, centuries old, that have descended from father to son, from mother to daughter, throughout the years.

But it is necessary to observe how the horseshoe lies before picking it up. If the ends are away from one the sign is that fortune will be within grasp, but by extravagance, carelessness or the operation of rogues it may depart. A sign to take care is given, therefore.

The right thing to do is to turn the horseshoe around so that the ends are toward the finder before picking it up. And in carrying it home it is correct to hold it with the ends upward, else the earth will attract to itself all the promised fortune.

When the shoe is nailed up on a door or window in its destined place the ends must be upward or the whole luck emblem will be nullified. Instead of keeping evil spirits away the shoe in the wrong position, it is contended, will attract them.

It is supposed that the element of electricity enters into the matter. From the shoe proceeds a current of beneficent rays that with the end upward will spread over the house as a protecting influence; with the ends downward the good rays are thrown into the all receiving earth, and with them many of the good influences that are about the place.

The luck of the horseshoe has a most respectable beginning. It is traced to the religion of the old Greeks and their sea god Poseidon, who was identical with the Roman sea god Neptune.

The Poseidon horses were sacred. He was believed to have created the first horse when he struck the ground with his trident and a horse sprang from the hole, which afterward became a spring. To him all springs were ascribed. In the shape of a horse he sometimes wandered by the shores of his ocean domain, and where he struck his hoofs deeply there the waters gushed out and permanent springs were formed.

This is the reason why horseshoes are considered lucky. Going to the root of the matter one sees a nature myth as the underlying principle. And to the sea all rain comes; to the sea all springs owe their primal origin. Also to the rain and fresh waters, sea derived, we owe all fertility.

The old Greeks therefore worshiped Poseidon as the fortune giver through his springs. They gave him horses and they adored the footprints of horses when they found them, for they might be the very footprints of the god's own horses.

When horses came to be shod the transition of the luck emblem from the footprint itself to the shoe mark—practically the same thing—was easy. Pegasus, the winged horse, from whose hoofs the water sprang gushed copiously when he came to earth, has been credited with the horseshoe luck.

Some legends had it that he was the son of Poseidon, and therefore gifted by his father with power to call the waters from the earth. Other tales state that Pegasus sprang from the trunk of Gorgon Medusa after Perseus had cut off her head. He had the power of producing famous springs which gave the gift of poesy, of art, of intellectual powers. From these springs the muses drank deeply.

The horseshoe was a specific against earthquakes. It would keep a house safe from harm by earth shaking. Again one perceives the sea myth—Poseidon was the shaker of the earth.